

June 29, 2004

Mr. Gary Mick
Department of Public Works
Environmental Services Division
City Campus, 2nd Floor
2711 West Wells Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53208

Subject: **Milwaukee County Parks Agricultural Lands
Resource & Lease Value Analysis**
Cedarburg Science Project # MilCo-2004-0422-01
Milwaukee County Project # 5082-04805

Dear Mr. Mick:

Cedarburg Science, LLC is pleased to submit this report addressing our findings of the Milwaukee County Parks Agricultural Lands Resource and Lease Value Analysis. The overall objective of this study was to:

- Review the current agricultural land leases and practices used on the fields, and
- Provide recommendations for updating and improving the Milwaukee County Parks Agricultural Lands Lease Program.

The attached report consists of a discussion of our findings as well as specific information and recommendations for each parcel and lessee. A summary of our general findings and recommendations follows.



Summary of Findings

- Most of the parcels were largely in compliance with the current leasing requirements.
- All of the lessees employed some type of conservation practice on the parcels, though conservation plans have yet to be written for the parcels.
- Most of the lessees were generally satisfied with the agricultural leasing program.
- The leasing structure and rates could be updated to meet the market standard, as well as better address the current needs of the county and lessees.
- A few problems were identified that involve communication between the County and lessees, noncompliance with current leases, and land management issues such as erosion, vandalism and pest management.

Summary of Recommendations

1. Update the Leasing Structure and Rates.

An across-the-board increase in rates is not recommended due to use issues and limitations associated with many of the parcels. An alteration of the rate structure in which rates are set based on acreage, soils, and crop type is recommended. Rates associated with the recommended categories range from \$45 to \$80 per acre. Current rates range from \$35 to \$50 per acre.

2. Conduct Annual Meetings.

Meetings between the County and each lessee should be performed at least annually to promote discussion regarding issues that the County or lessees may have concerning the parcels or program.

3. Conduct Annual Monitoring.

An annual inspection of the leased parcels should be performed in order to ensure compliance with lease requirements. In addition, documenting the condition of the fields will allow the County to measure progress of applied conservation practices. Having measurable objectives is an inherent



requirement of the Milwaukee County Land and Water Resource Management Plan.

4. Identify CRP and Cost-Share Opportunities

In order to address erosion problems and promote the protection of natural resources, each parcel should be evaluated for CRP and cost-share opportunities. A number of federal and state cost-sharing programs are available to assist with the installation and maintenance of conservation practices.

5. Develop Conservation Plans

Conservation plans should be developed for each parcel to promote sustainable agriculture and conserve the natural resources.

Cedarburg Science appreciates the opportunity to work with you in setting forth a successful Milwaukee County Parks Agricultural Lease Program. If you have any questions or require clarification, please call Ms. Plumeau at (262) 376-0735.

Sincerely,

CEDARBURG SCIENCE, LLC

Ginny Plumeau, REM
President
Principal Environmental Scientist

Stefanie Miklovic
Project Ecologist